

The INFORMANT

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

Veterans take honor flight to Washington

Two retired KCPD officers who rode together on patrol more than 60 years ago took a different kind of ride together in November: on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.

On Nov. 3, retired Sergeant Al Stewart and Patrolman Freddie Stephens boarded a chartered plane courtesy of the Honor Flight Network of Kansas City, a non-profit organization that seeks to thank and honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices by flying them to the nation's capital to visit and to reflect at their memorials. All expenses are paid for the honoree; accompanying guardians pay \$600.

Once Stewart and Stephens were made aware of this opportunity by friends and family, they were required to submit a detailed application.

Retired Patrolman Stephens' daughter, Melinda Reece, was able to accompany him on the trip. She was the one who encouraged him to apply.

"It was an honor," Reece said. "Dad hadn't really talked about his time. I knew he was on special gun boats called Mighty Midgets. He was on #54. He started talking more, and that's when he got interested in going. It was a long day, a good day, and he saw lots of things and lots of men."

She had a hat made to signify his service emblazoned with 'Mighty Midgets #54' on the front and 'KCPD' on the side to replace the first one that was getting pretty worn.

Prior to serving in the Navy from 1943-1947 during World War II and achieving the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class Gunners Mate, Stephens worked with the Kansas City Fire Department, which he re-joined upon his return. On his second try, and after securing his mother's permission, he came onto the police department.

Stephens is 90 years young, which makes him the oldest living and longest-retired KCPD retiree. He was the inaugural member of the 30/30 Club – having worked 30 years for KCPD, from 1949-1979, and then being retired for 30-plus years. He and Stewart both worked the same sectors out of the old Sheffield Station, occasionally

riding together. Stephens was a patrolman the whole time, driving the wagon, patrol cars, serving in plain clothes assignments and working the jail elevator.

Stephens said the Honor flight was an honor and a wonder.

"It was an enjoyable flight and seeing all the sights," he said. "Some of them were not there when I visited back in '68 while on vacation – like Iwo Jima and some others."



The trip was long, beginning at 10 p.m. the day before, and ending at 10 p.m. the following night. But he would recommend it to anyone.

All in all, Stephens said he's tickled to be alive at 90 with apparently excellent health, though everything has slowed down a bit.

Retired Sergeant

Stewart was with the department from 1954-1984 and also is a member of the 30/30 Club at 88 years young. While on KCPD, he was assigned to patrol, dispatch, homicide and fiscal.

His military time was spent in the Army, serving in Korea in 1951 and 1952. His rank was Corporal with the 3rd Infantry Division, 3rd Medical Corp, TDY (Temporary Duty) to the 9th Field Artillery.

Of his military service, Stewart said, "I wasn't there to set the world on fire. We didn't even

want to be there. I feel very, very fortunate being picked to go on that honor flight. It was very, very nice."

His friend told him about the program and sent him the application to complete. He received a call one night, and when told he was selected, he didn't believe them. But two weeks later, he received the envelope with the official agenda. There were several basic rules to follow, like don't wear new shoes because of all the walking.

The Saturday before the flight, the honorees were treated to a luncheon at Avondale Church, where 70-80 members of the Daughters of the American Revolution,



Al Stewart



Freddie Stephens

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Police partnership leads to crisis center

Police officers now have a place to take people in mental health or substance abuse crisis that provides comprehensive follow-up and treatment.

The Kansas City Assessment and Triage Center (KC-ATC) opened Oct. 31 and began taking referrals from KCPD's Crisis Intervention Team the first week of November.

"There really had been a huge gap in Kansas City," said Sergeant Sean Hess, supervisor of the Crisis Intervention Team Squad and a member of the KC-ATC Board of directors. "We've really had no front door for services and follow-up for people who need it."

The KC-ATC, located at 2600 E. 12th St., has 16 slots: eight for those in mental health crisis and eight for those who need to detox after substance abuse. KC-ATC only accepts patients from police or, beginning Dec. 1, from hospital emergency departments. Patients must agree to go to the center voluntarily. Depending on the situation, that decision can get a little easier when police inform them their other option is jail, Sergeant Hess said.

Once in the center, patients are medically assessed, and they can be transported to a hospital emergency department if medical care is needed. Police officers bringing patients can typically get in and out of the KC-ATC in 10 minutes or less, Sergeant Hess said.

KC-ATC will hold a patient for up to 23 hours, but that's only the beginning. In hospital emergency departments – which is where police had had to take those in mental health and substance abuse crisis – patients often were sent on their way with a prescription for medication and a referral to a mental health care provider, Sergeant Hess said. The onus was on the patient to arrange for their own follow-up care, which many were not in the correct mental state to do. At KC-ATC, case workers ensure patients

are assigned to their nearest mental health care provider, and that care provider is charged with following up with the patient. (Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements for the providers also give them incentive to ensure the patient is getting needed services.) If appropriate, the patient also will leave KC-ATC with needed medication in hand.

nearly three years. Much of it started with meetings between Municipal Court Judge Joe Locascio – a passionate advocate for eliminating homelessness – KCPD Deputy Chief Robert Kuehl and Lauren Moyer, vice president of ReDiscover, which operates the KC-ATC. They saw the need to stop the revolving door of those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders in the criminal justice system. According to data from the Missouri Hospital Association cited in a City news release, Kansas City emergency rooms received 17,000 visits annually from patients with substance abuse disorders and serious mental illness. Many had histories of repeated ER visits, with some as high as 100 per year.

In a Nov. 18 article for The National Council for Behavioral Health, Locascio and Moyer wrote of the ongoing problem:

"Before our collaboration, the only real options for law enforcement were to hold people with mental illness in jail or send them to a hospital emergency room. Jails are never an appropriate setting for someone in a mental health crisis and ERs are often overcrowded and ill-equipped to handle psychiatric conditions. Without accessible behavioral health services, mental illness put an unyielding strain on police departments and ERs."

Through a public-private partnership between the KCPD, City of Kansas City, Missouri Department of Mental Health and seven Kansas City hospitals, the KC-ATC was born. Officials hope it can be a model for other cities to get mentally ill people out of the criminal justice system.

"As we treat clients who otherwise would be in jail, we

hope to serve as an example of how to dissociate mental illness from incarceration," Locascio and Moyer wrote. "Through our work with the Kansas City Police Department, we hope to show that law enforcement officers play a vital role in community mental health. Moreover, as we work with clients, we hope to open the doors of treatment and recovery to those who need it most."



Above: Municipal Court Judge Joseph Locascio, a driving force behind the new Kansas City Assessment and Triage Center, spoke of its anticipated community impact at the grand opening Oct. 31. Below: The stabilization area of the new center for patients in mental health crisis. An identical sobering unit is in the same facility.



The case workers at KC-ATC get patients other needed resources, too, like housing support.

"We've taken some (homeless) people in there in the first week it was open who I never thought we'd get housed, and they're already engaged in the program," Sergeant Hess said.

The KC-ATC has been in the works for

45th annual ceremony awards valor



KCPD Officer William Hakes received the Life-Saving Award at the 45th Annual Metro Chiefs and Sheriffs Association's Awards for Valor. The award was presented by MCSA Vice President Jan Zimmerman, chief of the Raymore, Mo., Police Department (and a retired KCPD major).

Five KCPD officers were among some of the bravest law enforcement officers in the metropolitan area to be honored for their courage at the 45th Annual Awards for Valor luncheon Nov. 18.

Dozens of officers from around the metro area were recognized for acts of heroism. Fallen Kansas City Kansas Police Department members Detective Brad Lancaster and Captain Robert Melton received special recognition, as did the officers who assisted them and helped apprehend their attackers.

KCPD officers who won awards were:

Life-Saving Award – Officer William Hakes

Bronze Awards for Valor – Detectives Jeanelle Cesena and Dennis Paquette

Silver Awards for Valor – Officers Steven Bloch and Michael Holsworth

The annual event is coordinated by the KCPD Media Unit and sponsored by the Metropolitan Chiefs and Sheriffs Association, Greater Kansas City Public Safety Credit Union and the City of Riverside.

KCPD cleans up at MADD awards

The KCPD DUI Section almost swept the awards at the Mothers Against Drunk Driving Heartland Chapter's Heroes for Heartland Law Enforcement Recognition Banquet on Nov. 9. The Section received DUI Section of the Year for significantly reducing roadway alcohol-related deaths and injuries, and Sergeant Christopher Bentsch was recognized for his work as supervisor of the squad. Other awards for KCPD included:

- * Outstanding Work in Alcohol Enforcement: Officers Lawrence Pollard, Kori Smeiska, Timothy Fillpot and Nathan Magers
- * Sobriety Checkpoint Officer of the Year: Detective Tommy Gaddis
- * Outstanding Support to the DUI Unit: KCPD General Counsel Virginia Murray, Assistant General Counsel Jamie Cook and KC Municipal Prosecutor Kendrea White.



Police train women on car maintenance



More than 60 women came to three different sessions around the city in November to learn how to take care of their vehicles and protect themselves, thanks to KCPD, Auto Zone and Guadalupe Centers, Inc. Kansas City Police officers coordinated the women's Vehicle and Self Protection Training, and KCPD Fleet Operations Unit technicians showed women how to inspect everything from fluid levels to tire treads to battery posts on their own cars. Officers also taught basics in self-defense and what women should do if they end up stuck on the side of the road. The free course also gave provided light refreshments and ice scrapers, cans of de-icer, tire pressure gauges and air fresheners from Auto Zone. The goal of the training was to empower women with the knowledge to care for their own vehicles and avoid ending up stranded on the side of the road.

Upcoming Events

December 13

**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting**

December 25

Christmas

December 29

158th EOC Graduation

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(816) 234-5170
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Officially Speaking

Awards

Life-Saving Award

Officer Henry Nokes

Meritorious Service Award

Officer Michael Huth

Paralegal Assistant Melissa Luster

Retirements

Detective Brent Marchant

Officer Bryan Schindler

Project Coordinator Paula
McGinnis

Obituaries

Retired Captain Charles

Hockemeier

Retired Officer James Gudenkauf

Retired Officer John Jungden

25-Year Ring

Major Joseph McHale

The mission of the Kansas City
Missouri Police Department is to
protect and serve with
professionalism, honor and integrity.

Retired KCPD veterans take Honor Flight, *Continued from p. 1*

American Legion and other volunteers waited on them.

After arriving at the airport at 4 a.m. for a 6 a.m. departure, Stewart's adventure began. He said the flight was pretty good because Stephens was with him, and he could talk with him, some fellow Shriner friends and their grandsons.

When the plane landed, a volley of water cannons shot water over the top to welcome the honorees. There were hundreds of people, including a swing band and four women who looked very much like the Andrews Sisters.

"Just like when you came back to the States from overseas," Stewart said. "We had a police escort and were treated like royalty."

The 51 honorees boarded buses to visit several memorials. The Korean War Memorial had a computer there where Stewart entered the name of his fallen friend, Jimmy. That friend and three others enlisted in the Marine Reserves and encouraged Stewart to join with them after graduating from Manual High School. He declined, preferring to work. Shortly after, those friends were sent overseas, and Jimmy lost his life.

Stewart was drafted the following January.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was particularly impressive to Stewart. A nearby funeral, complete with taps and rifle volley, made the hair on the back of Stewart's neck stand up.

Stewart has kept busy with the Shriner's Children's Hospital, his 50-year Emeritus membership with Shriners, his lifetime membership with the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans.

Both men agreed the entire event was very impressive and emotional.